

REMARKS

Claims 11-18 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 11, 14 and 15 are amended. Reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

The Office Action rejects claims 11-18 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over Tsuchiya (U.S. Patent No. 6,204,912). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

In particular, Tsuchiya does not disclose or suggest in order to overlap patterns adjacent to each other in the scanning direction on the substrate to form the desired pattern, stitching the patterns by controlling an aperture shape of the aperture stop to control an exposure amount distribution in the predetermined direction in a stitching region which extends toward a direction intersecting the predetermined direction and in which the patterns are overlapped, as recited in independent claim 11.

Tsuchiya discloses that when a scanning exposure is performed with a plurality of projection exposure systems disposed along a direction perpendicular to a scanning direction, regions projected and exposed with the plurality of projection exposure systems are exposed to overlap with each other. When an upper layer is exposed with respect to a lower layer with this configuration, the regions overlapped with each other using the plurality of projection exposure systems are displaced by a predetermined amount such that the overlapped regions are not to be the same pattern position. Then, when four areas are connected in a static exposure, stitching portions for upper and lower layers are displaced from each other by a predetermined amount (see, for example, Figs. 3 and 5, col. 9, line 51- col. 10, line 7, and col. 10, lines 56-65).

Nowhere does Tsuchiya disclose or suggest controlling an aperture shape of the aperture stop to control an exposure amount distribution in the predetermined direction in a stitching region which extends toward a direction intersecting the predetermined direction and in which the patterns are overlapped.

Therefore, independent claim 11 defines patentable subject matter. Claims 12-18 depend from independent claim 11, and therefore also define patentable subject matter, as well as for the other features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is requested to consider the reference enclosed with the attached Information Disclosure Statement.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 11-18 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,


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Attachments:

Information Disclosure Statement
Petition for Extension of Time

Date: June 28, 2004

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